DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 120 363 CE 006 149

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TITLE	Splitting Up: Termination of a Tutoring Relationship. Instructional Concept Guide No. 12.
INSTITUTION	Georgia Univ., Athens. Regional Adult Literacy Service Unit.
PUB DATE	75
NOTE	19p.; For related documents, see CE 005 518, CE 006 140-148 and CE 006 754-758
AVAILABLE FROM	Dr. Robert A. Palmatier, Reading Department, 309 Aderhold Building, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602 ($1.50)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Achievement; Adult Literacy; *Adult Reading Programs; Adult Students; Paraprofessional Personnel; Reading Instruction; *Self Evaluation; *Student Evaluation; Student Improvement; *Student Teacher Relationship; Teacher Improvement; Tutorial Programs; *Tutoring; Tutors; Volunteer Training
IDENTIFIERS	*Tutor Support Library

ABSTRACT

The instructional concept guide is part of a system developed for tutor training and support. It is primarily designed for volunteers, but it can also be adapted to the training of paraprofessional tutors for any type of adult literacy program. A key component in the system is the Tutor Support Library, consisting of Instructional Concept Guides (training and reference aids for tutors) and Functional Content Units (models for the practical application of tutoring skills). Guide Twelve offers suggestions to help the tutor (1) recognize when the tutoring relationship should be ended and (2) end the relationship in a way that benefits the student and the tutor. The following topics are discussed: considering the next step for the student, changing tutors, evaluating student progress (including student self-evaluation), impasse (traumatic or otherwise), and evaluating tutor skill growth. (Author/MS)

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R A L S U

TUTOR SUPPORT LIBRARY

Instructional Concept Guide No. 12

SPLITTING UP

Termination of a Tutoring Relationship

by

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FOREWORD

The ability to read has been taken for granted in the United States for as long as most of us can remember. Unfortunately the "us" in the previous statement refers to those in the population who are indeed able to read --- for example, those of you reading this message. Adult readers make up an exclusive fraternity and seldom find themselves involved with non-readers. But in this century the tempo and technology of American life have increased dramatically. And more and more we see that a significant proportion of our citizens do not have the reading ability society requires.

In the 1970's, the Community Based Division of the Right to Read Effort addressed itself to overcoming what is rapidly becoming a crisis in the area of adult literacy. A common bond for many of the projects supported by this division of Right to Read is the use of volunteer tutors to teach the older, out-of-school individual who needs reading help. It has been generally found that, while the desire to tutor may be "born," the ability to tutor needs to be "made." Consequently the cry has gone out, "We have the volunteers but we do not have a system for training them to tutor."

RALSU, the Regional Adult Literacy Service Unit, a Right to Read Community Based project, has therefore accepted as its major responsibility the development of a tutor training and support

system. It is primarily designed for volunteers, but it can also be adapted to the training of para-professional tutors for any type of adult literacy program. The complete system includes tutor training, a support system for the working tutor, and evaluation strategies for both programs and tutors.

A key component in the system is the TUTOR SUPPORT LIBRARY. This consists of two series of units entitled Instructional Concept Guides and Functional Content Units. The Concept Guides orient and train beginning tutors and serve thereafter as reference aids for the on-the-job tutor. The Functional Content Units are designed as models for the practical application of the teaching skills gained in the tutor training. For convenience, all Guides and Units are separately bound.

The Instructional Concept Guide that follows this "Foreword" is one of the following:

1. Getting Together: Establishing a Working Tutorial Relationship
2. Teaching One-to-One: A Diagnostic Approach to Beginning Tutoring
3. Student-Centered Tutoring: Using Initial Lesson Results to Set Future Goals
4. Help: Inside and Outside the Tutoring Agency
5. Process and Product: A Guide for Assessment of Community Tutoring Programs
6. Word Concepts: An Adult Approach to Decoding Skills
7. The Teaching of Sight Words: Ways and Means
8. The Language Experience Approach: Application for Tutoring Adults in Reading

9. The Directed Reading Approach: A Lesson Organization Procedure Adapted for Use with Adults

10. The Newspaper: A Source of High-Interest Instructional Material for Adults

11. Resources: A Guide for Using Published Materials in Adult Literacy Programs

12. Splitting Up: Terminating a Tutoring Relationship

Guide 1 is an orientation to tutoring; Guides 2 and 3 lead the tutor through the first sessions with a student. Except for Guides 1, 2, and 3, however, the booklets need not necessarily be presented in consecutive order. Guides 6 through 10, for example, explain in detail teaching procedures that can be used to teach the lessons described in Guides 2 and 3. Other Guides, as their titles imply, deal with supplemental helps for the tutor and with program assessment.

Hopefully, these materials as a whole will satisfy a long felt need expressed by many persons involved in the management of adult literacy programs. It is also hoped that the flexibility of format will make the publications adaptable to individualizing requirements within programs.

SPLITTING UP

Termination of a Tutoring Relationship

Your work as a tutor, ideally, will continue as long as it is mutually beneficial to both you and your student. Either one or both of the following conditions will determine whether or not both of you have benefited as much as possible:

1) The student feels his needs and objectives have been met.

2) The tutor sees the student demonstrate behaviors which obviously fulfill the goals previously set for and with the student.

If either is the case it is time to stop the tutoring. You will find it much easier to tell when you have reached this point if you stated long term goals objectively in the first place, namely, in terms of what the student will have achieved. When you note that your student's skill has developed to the stage that you both initially agreed was his performance goal, it is obviously time to consider whether or not the tutoring needs to be continued.

In the "ideal" situation, both tutor and student should then reassess their goals and make plans for the student to move on to more advanced activities. It would be best if the student could independently select and manage whatever the next step in his progress should be. In most cases, however, you will be overly

optimistic to assume that he can. More than likely he will need your help in directing him to other agencies or institutions that offer programs suitable to his goals and present ability.

The kind of aid given will vary with the student. It may include only assistance in locating the proper level of help he needs. On the other hand, the final sessions in your tutoring might well be needed to develop student readiness for the next upward step by expanding his understanding of what that step will be like. This could include lesson material selected to teach him very practical information about what he might encounter in the new area. It might also include practice that will help him feel more secure when he is called upon to make that first new contact. Setting up a language experience dialogue or play in which the student has a chance to actually play the role he will soon be taking is an excellent method for this purpose.

Considering the Next Step

To be able to give the help required, you will need information on potential sources of aid in the student's community. A variety of sources may be consulted to learn more about what is available. Instructional Concept Guide No. 4, "Help: Inside and Outside the Tutoring Agency," discusses possible sources for help in locating information. You also may find that the tutoring agency in which you work has a directory of community resources. Such directories usually provide basic information concerning the

services offered, contact procedures, eligibility, and cost.

Realistic options for a student at this point will be governed by a number of aspects (and remember that you have little input or control over some of these). Of concern will be his financial circumstances, his ability to travel beyond his immediate neighborhood, such individual variables as initiative and general know-how as well as the level of educational competence he has reached. For example, a student would need to be able to read on approximately a sixth grade level (or in more functional terms, to read the newspaper comfortably) to succeed in a program preparing high school dropouts to pass a high school equivalency examination for the GED diploma. At least the same reading level would be required in an adult high school or vocational school. For a particular job or employment training program, special reading skills might be needed and therefore would be important considerations in assessing and guiding student aspirations.

Federal job training programs, industrial work/study programs and junior college study require an increasing degree of skill and relative sophistication of performance. The ability to read and understand vocabulary related to specific subjects (such as social studies, math, and science) will be critical factors in determining a student's performance ability. Even more vital will be the ability to handle terminology and concepts unique to a chosen vocational area. Independent learning and study skills are also essential for managing programs beyond the tutorial level. Thus, final tutoring sessions might cover some of the skills

potentially required as the student moves on to further learning experiences.

These factors demand careful understanding, pointing up an additional responsibility of the tutor. Guiding the student in setting realistic short term goals while not discouraging less easily attained long range aspirations is a vital tutor role. Such guidance requires joint and practical discussion of alternatives. Conclusions reached in such interchanges can provide a firm base for equipping the student to do a better job of setting his own priorities and of making reasonable demands of himself. This, in turn, should help him to get the most benefit possible in the way of positive reinforcement whenever he does achieve one of his short term goals. Obviously this creates a more satisfying situation than being forced to continually strive for an indefinite long term goal.

Changing Tutors

It is impractical to assume that the "ideal" tutoring arrangement mentioned earlier is always possible. Any number of causes may result in the end of the tutoring sessions. Changes in the schedule of either student or tutor or various other conflicts may result in a necessary but premature conclusion of a tutoring relationship. However, whatever the cause of the termination, several factors should be considered.

Perhaps the most important factor is the caring attitude

mentioned earlier. This attitude of tutor toward student should be maintained as the tutoring sessions end just as diligently as it was nurtured throughout the sessions. Such an attitude can best be demonstrated by what you do and say to your student. In effect, this means communicating to him that you will continue to care what happens to him even after tutoring meetings end. For example if, for whatever reason, you are no longer able to continue tutoring, you must take the time to explain, in terms he can understand, the circumstances that are causing you to leave. Your student needs to be assured that, insofar as possible, you will help the agency find another tutor to work with him, and that you will certainly be interested in the new tutoring arrangement. After your last session, prove your sincerity by communicating with him either by telephone or a brief written note. This kind of communication is important to the student and is a statement of your respect for his well-being as a learner and as a person.

Another way of demonstrating your concern for a student's continued progress is to collect, summarize and report information to the new tutor or follow-up agency. This report should include:

1) A written summary of the student's work (goals, activities, evaluations).

2) Samples of the student's work and your subsequent recommendations.

3) Suggestions as to student strengths, weaknesses, and potential directions for future sessions.

The report should be accompanied, if possible, by personal contact with the new tutor, offers of continued help, follow-up inquiries, and perhaps even a joint meeting with the new tutor and your ex-student.

It is important, however, to remember that each tutor-student relationship is unique. You, as the former tutor, should exercise caution to avoid any act which might be interpreted as interference in that developing relationship. Be as helpful as possible without doing anything which might undermine the new tutor's position and confidence. Specifically, this means contributing relevant information to strengthen the new relationship, but not interjecting yourself, or your assessments of the new tutor's activities, into the current tutoring arrangement. Without any encouragement from you the student will voice comparisons about his old and new tutors during the transition period. So show your concern and support, but do it from a distance. For example:

1) Remember him with a card on special occasions.

2) Send newspaper clippings that you know would interest him.

3) Notify him of community activities within his interests.

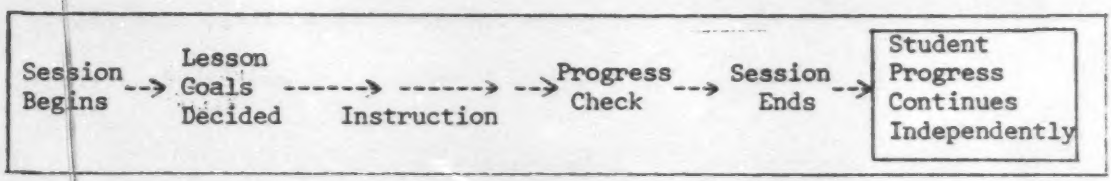
Communications may be sent to the student directly or to the student through the new tutor (as a way of connecting the three of you in the common effort of caring and learning).

To avoid wounded feelings on your part it is essential to remember that tutoring has been the basis for your relationship. It is not a good idea to try to keep up a social relationship

after you end the teacher-student connection. Be careful not to cause your ex-student to feel that he must now pay for tutoring by adding himself to your circle of friends. An easy friendly relationship of rather distant support will be all that most students will choose to handle and appreciate.

Directly involving your student in the process of transferring information to the new tutor provides an opportunity for positive student input. Including him in such an exchange adds one more opportunity for communicating your respect for him. It also provides further affirmation of his progress. This, along with the regular evaluation of progress that is a part of each tutoring session, will provide support for helping your student learn to evaluate himself in a capable manner.

Progress Evaluation Process

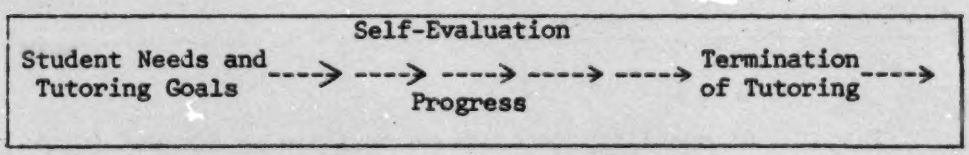


The student's ability to continue to learn by himself (without tutorial guidance) and how effective he has become at such independent learning is the true measure of the tutoring team's success. If he is beginning to move on alone, then you know he is developing the type of skills necessary to help him achieve his long term aspirations as well as the short term goals you have

been working on jointly.

Usually evaluation will be improved if the student is guided into contributing to the assessment process. His perspective is unique, of course, as it relates to planning future sessions for him. No tutor alone could see the situation through the student's eyes. In addition, actively seeking his opinion is a form of short term reward to the student. As he looks at what he was able to accomplish in each session, he can see at least a degree of progress and most certainly direction for other things he needs to learn. He may well be able to give you, for example, a clue about why a certain approach did or did not work for him.

With such a self-evaluation base, your student can participate in the overall evaluation of tutoring sessions. At that point he can benefit from comparing his initial sight word test with his last check-up on sight words; he can make useful comparisons between his first and his final lesson activities and materials; he can look at his original goals and his current level of performance. He can survey his over-all progress line and its direction:



In the event that the termination of tutoring is at the request of the student rather than the tutor --- follow-up communication is still necessary. Follow-up could encourage the student to return to tutoring sessions. Anything that tends to relieve

his anxiety about a new or difficult task may salvage the relationship and become the incentive for him to try again. A telephone call, a note, or anything else that reinforces the student's self respect as a viable memember of the tutoring/tutored team can help him feel comfortable about the whole affair even though he is indeed quitting.

It cannot be stressed too often that the number one goal of both you, as an individual tutor, and of the tutoring agency as a whole should be centered on the student when he leaves you, just as it was when he came to you. He should walk out of your last session with a positive attitude about himself and about his efforts to become a better reader. He should be eager to continue his studies --- on his own, with another tutor, or in a higher level situation.

Impasse --- Traumatic or Otherwise

It is nice to talk about the fine, positive feelings which should be present as a tutoring relationship ends. But what if there are no positive feelings? Tutor/student relationships are not immune to any of the usual conflicts which can cause two people not to get along together. It is too bad if that happens, but it is even worse if it is allowed to destroy future opportunities for either student or tutor. If you cannot work together, face it!

If you experience a growing fear that your tutoring relationship is on a failure course, do not sit idly by until the ax falls. The situation demands investigation. As a beginning, try talking with your student to see if he feels the same way. Even though he may not be able to bring himself to tell you that he also feels badly about the relationship, his feelings will probably be obvious during tutoring sessions. He may also begin to miss sessions without good reason or to act indifferent during tutoring. Any such indication of reduced interest should be considered. The next step, then, should be to contact your tutoring supervisor. Talk the situation over with him and seek his suggestions.

But let's say nothing helps, and you and/or your student cannot continue pretending that everything is okay! At this stage the tutor supervisor must be asked to intervene directly. In some rare cases he may be able to serve as a counselor and help the two of you reach an understanding and start over with a workable tutor-student relationship. However, that usually will not be possible (even though it would admittedly be a valuable learning and growth experience for all concerned). When the relationship cannot be salvaged, the tutor supervisor should arrange to terminate the particular relationship and reassign each of you to a new team.

After an experience like that, you as a tutor may need to carefully re-evaluate your feelings about your own role and the program in which you are working. Be sure to consider the possibility that you are having conflicts with emotional and social

factors. One often feels sure that he would be capable of handling emotional and social problems that he has heard or read about. But those situations are abstract and, at the least, are someone else's problems. When the same problems involve us personally, the shoe is often on the other foot. All that cool logic we were able to bring to bear on someone else's trouble is suddenly gone.

It would simply be foolish not to be honest about you own feelings when considering a relationship that will require the personal closeness of one-to-one tutoring. You may have limitations in the type of student with whom you can work. Likewise you may need to be selective about the agency in which you serve. While we may similarly wish we did not have them, racial and social biases may contribute to tutor-student conflicts. Their existence must be faced honestly if they interfere with tutoring.

If you are bothered by some particular personal or group characteristics, bear those restrictions in mind when you volunteer. If a frustrated tutoring relationship makes you aware of limitations you did not realize existed, profit from the experience. When you volunteer your services again, you must set the conditions under which you feel you can work. Tutor supervisors will understand such conditions and appreciate your level of self understanding.

Working out your frustration following the termination of an unsuccessful tutoring relationship is important. You need to leave the situation aware of what happened and why things went wrong. Not only will this leave you with a more honest and valid

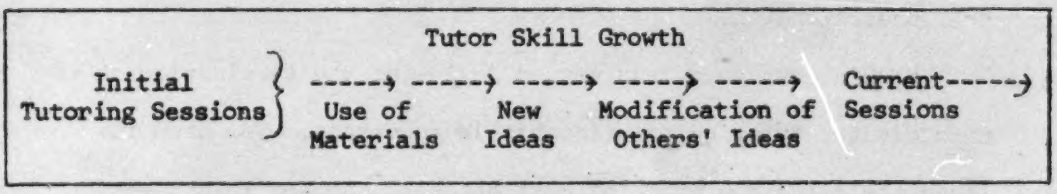
self-concept, but it will also prepare you to start over again. Hopefully you will begin again! The tutor supervisor and tutor trainer should be used as your resources in helping you understand why this tutoring effort did not succeed. They will also help you to prepare for and begin a new tutoring relationship.

And What Did It Profit You ...?

Often tutors fail to accept the reality that they need to profit as well as to give. As a tutoring relationship ends self-evaluation is a must. It is certainly valid to ask, "What about me, the tutor?" Several aspects of your circumstances need to be considered.

When you look at the progress of the student who is terminating you may not see any obvious signs of accomplishment. How will that affect your self concept? You very likely will feel that you could have done more for this student.

At this point, take time to look at your <u>own</u> progress as a tutor as well as at the student's progress in skill acquisition. How far have <u>you</u> moved on the continuum of tutor skills?



How often do you relate an experience, a news article, a magazine

picture to a tutoring session and to a student need? How well do you look and listen now to cues from your student about not only his interests and skill needs, but also his general mood and concerns?

Look at the arrows extending beyond the current sessions. How much do you want the opportunity to try tutoring another student? If you feel good about the tutoring experience and your skills as a tutor, your answer should reflect a genuine desire to continue as a tutor. If it has worked out well and you do feel good about it, accept a few deserved pats on the back:

THAT WAS A GREAT JOB YOU DID!!!

BE PLEASED WITH YOURSELF. BE PROUD!!!

However, don't waste that good feeling by letting your tutoring skills cool too long. Get right back at it; ask for another student.

When you start that next tutoring relationship, you must begin the building all over again. But this time you will be starting from a stronger, more experienced position. The new student will not have your cushion of experience, so be ready to reassure and encourage him. You will not, of course, be starting where the previous student concluded his work. You will again need to diagnose, listen, and tailor activities to fit the diagnosis. By all means, avoid comparing your previous students with your current students. Comparisons would be based on your perception (and remember that you now have added experience) and may therefore be distorted by changes in you. Every time you guide a student to positive termination of tutoring, you strengthen both his position

as a learner and your position as a tutor. Both came to the tutoring program in the hope of gain and it is only right that both should leave satisfied that those goals have been achieved.